

Remarks:

New claim 19 includes features recited in original claims 1 and 2, further defines the function of the two free ends providing for simultaneous pulling, for example, as taught at page 9, lines 34-36, and further defines the loop of thread as penetrating at least a portion of the punctal plug “in a manner allowing the fine thread to be pulled out of the punctal plug by pulling one end of the fine thread,” as is taught at page 9, lines 37-39. New claims 21 and 22 correspond to original claim 4. The “disc-shaped brim” recited by claim 20 is a feature recited in original claim 3. New claims 23-25 correspond to original claim 5. Finally, new claim 26 corresponds to the description at page 9, line 32.

The objections to claims 1 and 7 are believed to be moot in view of the cancellation of those claims and the wording of the newly presented claims.

The rejection of claim 1 (paragraph 2 of the office action) is believed to be moot because, as noted above, the only new independent claim (claim 19) includes the limitation of original claim 2.

The rejection of claims 2, 4, 9 and 13 for obviousness over Kaneka is respectfully traversed. Kaneka discloses a “cord 33” (see the abstract of the attached translation downloaded from the JPO website) or “string-like object 33” (see paragraph [0013] of the attached translation) attached to a single point of the acrimal punctum plug. In contradistinction, the claimed device is a loop of thread which completely penetrates the plug so as to terminate at two free ends for simultaneously pulling on the punctum plug pull outward in the event that the brim becomes lodged in the canaliculus. Further, the thread in the present invention penetrates the punctal plug “in a manner allowing the fine thread to be pulled out of the punctal plug by pulling one end of the fine thread. It should be noted that the latter feature is incompatible with the use of a cord or string attached at a single point as disclosed by Kaneka. If the cord or string in Kaneka were to be attached in such a way that it could be pulled out of the plug, it could not perform its intended function of pulling out the plug.

Further, the Examiner's assertion that the fine thread used in the present invention and defined as having a maximum diameter of 0.05 mm differs from the cord or string of Kaneka only in terms of relative dimension, is also traversed. A cord or string is commonly regarded as composed of plural threads.

It also should be noted that by pulling on a cord attached to one point on the brim of the plug, as disclosed by Kaneka, is more likely to cause the plug to cant, which canting is likely to make removal or repositioning of the plug more difficult.

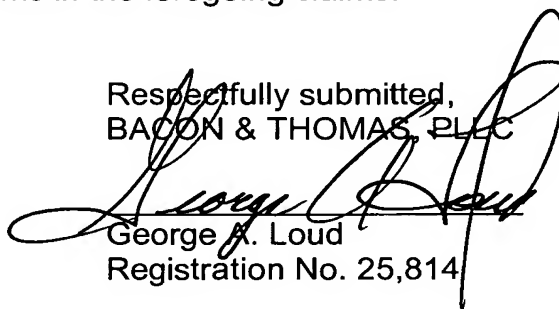
The rejection of claims, 3, 5-8, 10-12 and 14-18 for obviousness over JP 2002-529144 is believed to be intended as a rejection over Kaneka in view of the Japanese publication, in that paragraph 4 of the office action, which explains the rejection, clearly relies upon the teachings of Kaneka as the primary reference. In any event, the rejection is considered to be moot because none of the newly presented claims recite the feature for which the Japanese publication is cited.

In conclusion, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider the rejection in light of the newly drafted claims in the foregoing claims.

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Date

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